THE CONTEST IN MARYLAND.

Our Special Correspondent's Account.

The Great Battle of Wednesday.

GRAPHIC AND INTERESTING PARTICULARS

TERRIBLE ENCOUNTERS.

DESPERATION OF THE REBELS.

Heroic Determination of our Troops

Fighting Joe Hooker Glorious Again.

Great Gallantry of All Officers and Men.

The Union Army Victorious in Each Day's Fight.

ACCOUNTS OF OUR LOSSES.

From Our Special Correspondent.

BATTLE-FIELD OF SHARPSBURG, Wednesday evening, Sept. 17, 1862.

Fierce and desperate battle between 200,000 men has raged since daylight, yet night closes on an uncertain field. It is the greatest fight since Waterloo—all over the field contested with an obstinacy equal even to Waterloo. If not wholly a victory to-night, I believe it is the prelude to a victory to-morrow. But what can be foretold of the future of a fight in which from 5 in the morning till 7 at night the best troops of the continent have fought without decisive result?

I have no time for speculation—no time even to gather details of the battle—only time to state its broadest features—then mount and spur for New-York.

After the brilliant victory near Middletown, Gen. McClellan pushed forward his army rapidly, and reached Keedysville with three corps on Monday night. That march has already been described. On the day following the two armies faced each other idly, until night. Artillery was busy at intervals; once in the morning opening with spirit, and continuing for half an hour, with vigor, till the Rebel battery, as usual, was silenced.

McClellan was on the hill where Benjamin's battery was stationed and found himself suddenly under a rather heavy fire. It was still uncertain whether the Rebels were retreating or re-enforcing—their batteries would remain in position in either case, and as they had withdrawn nearly all their troops from view, there was only the doubtful indication of columns of dust to the rear.

On the evening of Tuesday, Hooker was ordered to cross the Antietam Creek with his corps, and, feeling the left of the enemy, to be ready to attack next morning. During the day of apparent inactivity, McClellan had been maturing his plan of battle, of which Hooker's movement was one development.

The position on either side was peculiar. When Richardson advanced on Monday he found the enemy deployed and displayed in force on a cresent-shaped ridge, the outline of which followed more or less exactly the course of Antietam Creek. Their lines were then forming, and the revelation of force in front of the ground which they really intended to hold, was probably meant to de ay our attack until their arrangements to receive it were complete.

During that day they kept their troops exposed and did not move them even to avoid the artillery fire, which must have been occasionally annoying. Next morning the lines and columns which had darkened cornfields and hill crests, had been withdrawn. Broken and wooded ground behind the sheltering hills concealed the Rebel masses. What from our front looked like only a narrow summit fringed with woods was a broad table-land of forest and ravines—cover for troops everywhere, nowhere easy access for an enemy. The smoothly sloping surface in front and the sweeping crescent of slowly mingling lines was only a delusion. It was all a Rebel stronghold beyond.

Under the base of these hills runs the deep stream called Antietam Creek, fordable only at distant points. Three bridges cross it, one on the Hagerstown road, one on the Sharpsburg pike, one to the left in a deep recess of steeply falling hills. Hooker passed the first to reach the ford by which he crossed, and it was held by Pleasanton with a reserve of cavalry during the battle. The second was close under the Rebel center, and no way important to yesterday's fight. At the third, Burnside attacked and finally crossed. Between the first and third lay most of the battle lines. They stretched four miles from right to left.

Unaided attack in front was impossible. McClellan's forces lay behind low, disconnected ridges, in front of the Rebel summits, all or nearly all unwooded. They gave some cover for artillery, and guns were therefore massed on the center. The enemy had the Shepherdstown road and the Hagerstown and Williamsport road both open to him in rear for retreat. Along one or the other, if beaten, he must fly. This, among other reasons, determined, perhaps, the plan of battle which McClellan finally resolved on.

The plan was generally as follows: Hooker was to cross on the right, establish himself on the enemy's left if possible, flanking his position, and to open the fight. Sumner, Franklin, and Mansfield were to send their forces also to the right, co-operating with and sustaining Hooker's attack while advancing also nearer the center. The heavy work in the center was left mostly to the batteries, Porter massing his infantry supports in the hollows. On the left Burnside was to carry the bridge already referred to, advancing then by a road which enters the pike at Sharpsburg, turning at once the Rebel left flank and destroying his line of retreat. Porter and Sykes were held in reserve. It is obvious that the complete success of a plan contemplating widely divergent movements of separate corps, must largely depend on accurate timing, that the attacks should be simultaneous and not successive.

Hooker moved on Tuesday afternoon at four, crossing the creek at a ford above the bridge and well to the right, without opposition. Fronting south-west his line advanced not quite on the Rebel flank but overlapping and threatening it. Turning off from the road after passing the stream, he sent forward cavalry skirmishers straight into the woods and over the fields beyond. Rebel pickets withdrew slowly before them, firing scattering and harmless shots. Turning again to the left, the cavalry went down on the Rebel flank, coming suddenly close to a battery which met them with unexpected grape and canister. It being the nature of cavalry to retire before batteries, this company loyally followed the law of its being, and came swiftly back without pursuit.

Artillery was sent to the front, infantry was rapidly deployed, and skirmishers went out in front and on either flank. The corps moved forward compactly, Hooker as usual reconnoitering in person. They came at last to an open grass-sown field inclosed on two sides with woods, protected on the right by a hill, and entered through a corn field in the rear. Skirmishers entering these woods were instantly met by Rebel shots, but held their ground, and as soon as supported advanced and cleared the timber. Beyond, on the left and in front, volleys of musketry opened heavily, and a battle seemed to have begun a little sooner than it was expected.

Gen. Hooker formed his lines with precision and without hesitation. Ricketts's Division went into the woods on the left in force. Meade, with the Pennsylvania Reserves, formed in the center. Doubleday was sent out on the right, planting his batteries on the hill, and opening at once on a Rebel battery that began to enfilade the central line. It was already dark, and the Rebel position could only be discovered by the flashes of their guns. They pushed forward boldly on the right, after losing ground on the other flank, but made no attempt to regain their first hold on the woods. The fight flashed, and glimmered, and faded, and finally went out in the dark.

Hooker had found out what he wanted to know. When the firing ceased the hostile lines lay close to each other—their pickets so near that six Rebels were captured during the night. It was inevitable that the fight should recommence at daylight. Neither side had suffered considerable loss; it was a skirmish, not a battle. "We are through for to-night, gentlemen," remarked the General, "but to-morrow we fight the battle that will decide the fate of the Republic."

Not long after the firing ceased, it sprang up again on the left. Gen. Hooker, who had taken up his headquarters in a barn, which had been nearly the focus of the Rebel artillery, was out at once. First came rapid and unusually frequent picket shots, then several heavy volleys. The General listened a moment and smiled grimly. "We have no troops there. The Rebels are shooting each other. It is Fair Oaks over again." So everybody lay down again, but all the night through there were frequent alarms.

McClellan had been informed of the night's work, and of the certainties awaiting the dawn. Sumner was ordered to move his corps at once, and was expected to be on the ground at daylight. From the extent of the Rebel lines developed in the evening, it was plain that they had gathered their whole army behind the hights and were waiting for the shock.

The battle began with the dawn. Morning found both armies just as they had slept, almost close enough to look into each others eyes. The left of Meade's reserves and the right of Ricketts's line became engaged at nearly the same moment, one with artillery, the other with infantry. A battery was almost immediately pushed forward beyond the central woods, over a plowed field, near the top of the slope where the corn-field began. On this open field, in the corn beyond, and in the woods which stretched forward into the broad fields, like a promontory into the ocean, were the hardest and deadliest struggles of the day.

For half an hour after the battle had grown to its full strength, the line of fire swayed neither way. Hooker's men were fully up to their work. They saw their General everywhere in front, never away from the fire, and all the troops believed in their commander, and fought with a will. Two-thirds of them were the same men who under McDowell had broken at Manassas.

The half hour passed, the Rebels began to give way a little, only a little, but at the first indication of a receding fire, Forward, was the word, and on went the line with a cheer and a rush. Back across the corn-field leaving dead and wounded behind them, over the fence, and across the road, and then back again into the dark woods which closed around them, went the retreating Rebels.

Meade and his Pennsylvanians followed hard and fast—followed till they came within easy range of the woods, among which they saw their beaten enemy disappearing—followed still, with another cheer, and flung themselves against the cover.

But out of those gloomy woods came suddenly and heavily terrible volleys—volleys which smote, and bent, and broke in a moment that eager front, and hurled them swiftly back for half the distance they had won. Not swiftly, nor in panic, any further. Closing up their shattered lines, they came slowly away—a regiment where a brigade had been, hardly a brigade where a whole division had been, victorious. They had met from the woods the first volleys of musketry from fresh troops—had met them and returned them till their line had yielded and gone down before the weight of fire, and till their ammunition was exhausted.

In ten minutes the fortune of the day seemed to have changed—it was the Rebels now who were advancing, pouring out of the woods in endless lines, sweeping through the corn-field from which their comrades had just fled. Hooker sent in his nearest brigade to meet them, but it could not do the work. He called for another. There was nothing close enough, unless he took it from his right. His right might be in danger if it was weakened, but his center was already threatened with annihilation. Not hesitating one moment, he sent to Doubleday: "Give me your best brigade instantly."

The best brigade came down the hill to the right on the run, went through the timber in front through a storm of shot and bursting shell and crashing limbs, over the open field beyond, and straight into the corn-field, passing as they went the fragments of three brigades shattered by the Rebel fire, and streaming to the rear. They passed by Hooker, whose eyes lighted as he saw those veteran troops led by a soldier whom he knew he could trust. "I think they will hold it," he said.

Gen. Hartstuff took his troops very steadily, but now that they were under fire, not hurriedly, up the hill from which the corn-field begins to descend, and formed them on the crest. Not a man who was not in full view—not one who bent before the storm. Firing at first in volleys, they fired them at will with wonderful rapidity and effect. The whole line crowned the hill and stood out darkly against the sky, but lighted and shrouded ever in flame and smoke. There were the 12th and 13th Massachusetts and another regiment which I cannot remember—old troops all of them.

There for half an hour they held the ridge unyielding in purpose, exhaustless in courage. There were gaps in the line, but it nowhere quailed. Their General was wounded badly early in the fight, but they fought on. Their supports did not come—they determined to win without them. They began to go down the hill and into the corn, they did not stop to think that their ammunition was nearly gone, they were there to win that field and they won it. The Rebel line for the second time fled through the corn and into the woods. I cannot tell how few of Harteuff's brigade were left when the work was done, but it was done. There was no more gallant, determined, heroic fighting in all this desperate day. Gen. Harteuff is very severly wounded, but I do not believe he counts his success too dearly purchased.

The crisis of the fight at this point had arrived; Ricketts's division, vainly endeavoring to advance, and exhausted by the effort, had fallen back. Part of Mansfield's corps was ordered in to their relief, but Mansfield's troops came back again, and their General was mortally wounded. The left nevertheless was too extended to be turned, and too strong to be broken. Rickette sent word he could not advance, but could hold his ground. Doubleday had kept his guns at work on the right, and had finally silenced a Rebel battery that for half an hour had poured in a galling enfilading fire along Hooker's central line.

There were woods in front of Doubleday's hill which the Rebels held, but so long as those guns pointed that way they did not care to attack. With his left then able to take care of itself, with his right impregnable with two brigades of Mansfield still fresh and coming rapidly up, and with his center a second time victorious, Gen. Hooker determined to advance. Orders were sent to Crawford and Gordon—the two Mansfield brigades—to move directly forward at once, the batteries in the center were ordered on, the whole line was called on, and the General himself went forward.

To the right of the corn-field and beyond it was a point of woods. Once carried and firmly held, it was the key of the position. Hooker determined to take it. He rode out in front of his furthest troops on a hill to examine the ground for a battery. At the top he dismounted and went forward on foot, completed his reconnoisance, returned and remounted. The musketry fire from the point of woods was all the while extremely hot. As he put his foot in the stirrup a fresh volley of rifle bullets came whizzing by. The tall soldierly figure of the General, the white horse which he rode, the elevated place where he was—all made him a most dangerously conspicuous mark. So he had been all day, riding often without a staff officer or an orderly near him—all sent off on urgent duty—visible everywhere on the field. The Rebel bullets had followed him all day, but they had not hit him, and he would not regard them. Remounting on this hill he had not ridden five steps when he was struck in the foot by a ball.

Three men were shot down at the same moment by his side. The air was alive with bullets. He kept on his horse for a few moments, though the wound was severe and excessively painful, and would not dismount till he had given his last order to advance. He was himself in the very front. Swaying unsteadily on his horse, he turned in his seat to look about him. "There is a regiment to the right. Order it forward! Crawford and Gordon are coming up. Tell them to carry those woods and hold them—and it is our fight!"

It was found that the bullet had passed completely through his foot. The surgeon who examined it on the spot could give no opinion whether bones were broken, but it was afterward ascertained that though grazed they were not fractured. Of course the severity of the wound made it impossible for him to keep the field which he believed already won, so far as it belonged to him to win it. It was nine o'clock. The fight had been furious since five. A large part of his command was broken, but with his right still untouched and with Crawford's and Gordon's brigades just up, above all, with the advance of the whole central line which the men had heard ordered with cheers, with a regiment already on the edge of the woods he wanted, he might well leave the field, thinking the battle was won—that *his* battle was won, for I am writing, of course, only about the attack on the Rebel left.

I see no reason why I should disguise my admiration of Gen. Hooker's bravery and soldierly ability. Remaining nearly all the morning on the right, I could not help seeing the sagacity and promptness of his maneuvers, how completely his troops were kept in hand, how devotedly they trusted to him, how keen was his insight into the battle; how every opportunity was seized and every reverse was checked and turned into another success. I say this the more unreservedly, because I have no personal relation whatever with him, never saw him till the day before the fight, and don't like his politics or opinions in general. But what are politics in such a battle?

Sumner arrived just as Hooker was leaving, and assumed command. Crawford and Gordon had gone into the woods, and were holding them stoutly against heavy odds. As I rode over toward the left I met Sumner at the head of his column advancing rapidly through the timber, opposite the point where Crawford was fighting. The veteran General was riding alone in the forest far ahead of his leading brigade, his hat off, his gray hair and beard and mustache strangely contrasting with the fire in his eyes and his martial air, as he hurried on to where the bullets were thickest.

Sedgwick's division was in advance, moving forward to support Crawford and Gordon. Rebel reenforcements were approaching also, and the struggle for the roads was again to be renewed. Sumner sent forward two divisions, Richardson and French, on the left. Sedgwick moving in column of divisions through the woods in rear, deployed and advanced in line over the corn-field. There was a broad interval between him and the nearest division, and he saw that if the Rebel line were complete his own division was in immediate danger of being flanked. But his orders were to advance, and those are the orders which a soldier—and Sedgwick is every inch a soldier—loves best to hear.

To extend his own front as far as possible, he ordered the 34th New-York to move by the left flank. The maneuver was attempted under a fire of the greatest intensity, and the regiment broke. At the same moment the enemy, perceiving their advantage, came round on that flank. Crawford was obliged to give on the right, and his troops pouring in confusion through the ranks of Sedgwick's advance brigade, threw it into disorder and back on the second and third lines. The enemy advanced, their fire increasing.

Gen. Sedgwick was three times wounded, in the shoulder, leg and wrist, but he persisted in remaining on the field so long as there was a chance of saving it. His Adjt.-Gen., Major Sedgwick, bravely rallying and trying to reform the troops, was shot through the body, the bullet lodging in the spine, and fell from his horse. Severe as the wound is it is probably not mortal. Lieut. Howe, of Gen. Sedgwick's staff, endeavored vainly to rally the 34th New-York. They were badly cut up and would not stand. Half their officers were killed or wounded, their colors shot to pieces, the Color-Sergeant killed, every one of the color-guard wounded. Only thirty-two were afterward got together.

The 15th Massachusetts went into action with 17 officers and nearly 600 men. Nine officers were killed or wounded, and some of the latter are prisoners. Capt. Simons, Capt. Saunders of the Sharpshooters, Lieut. Derby, and Lieut. Berry are killed. Capt. Bartlett and Capt. Jocelyn, Lieut. Sourr, Lieut. Gale, and Lieut. Bradley are wounded. One hundred and thirty-four men were the only remnant that could be collected of this splendid regiment.

Gen. Dana was wounded. Gen. Howard, who took command of the division after Gen. Sedgwick was disabled, exerted himself to restore order; but it could not be done there. Gen. Sumner ordered the line to be reformed under fire. The test was too severe for volunteer troops under such a fire. Sumner himself attempted to arrest the disorder, but to little purpose. Lieut.-Col. Revere and Capt. Audenried of his staff were wounded severely, but not dangerously. It was impossible to hold the position. Gen. Sumner withdrew the division to the rear, and once more the corn-field was abandoned to the enemy.

French sent word he could hold his ground. Richardson, while gallantly leading a regiment under a heavy fire, was severely wounded in the shoulder. Gen. Meagher was wounded at the head of his brigade. The loss in general officers was becoming frightful.

At 1 o'clock affairs on the right had a gloomy look. Hooker's troops were greatly exhausted, and their General away from the field. Mansfield's were no better. Sumner's command had lost heavily, but two of his divisions were still comparatively fresh. Artillery was yet playing vigorously in front, though the ammunition of many of the batteries was entirely exhausted, and they had been compelled to retire.

Doubleday held the right inflexibly. Sumner's headquarters were now in the narrow field where, the night before, Hooker had begun the fight. All that had been gained in front had been lost! The enemy's batteries, which if advanced and served vigorously might have made sad work with the closely-massed troops were fortunately either partially disabled or short of ammunition. Sumner was confident that he could hold his own; but another advance was out of the question. The enemy on the other hand, seemed to be too much exhausted to attack.

At this crisis Franklin came up with fresh troops and formed on the left. Slocum, commanding one division of the corps, was sent forward along the slopes lying under the first ranges of Rebel hills, while Smith, commanding the other division, was ordered to retake the corn-fields and woods which all day had been so hotly contested. It was done in the handsomest style. His Maine and Vermont regiments and the rest went forward on the run, and, cheering as they went, swept like an avalanche through the corn-fields, fell upon the woods, cleared them in ten minutes, and held them. They were not again retaken.

The field and its ghastly harvest which the reaper had gathered in those fatal hours remained finally with us. Four times it had been lost and won. The dead are strewn so thickly that as you ride over it you cannot guide your horse's steps too carefully. Pale and bloody faces are everywhere upturned. They are sad and terrible, but there is nothing which makes one's heart beat so quickly as the imploring look of sorely wounded men who beckon wearily for help which you cannot stay to give.

Gen. Smith's attack was so sudden that his success was accomplished with no great loss. He had gained a point, however, which compelled him to expect every moment an attack, and to hold which, if the enemy again brought up reserves, would take his best energies and best troops. But the long strife, the heavy losses, incessant fighting over the same ground repeatedly lost and won inch by inch, and more than all, perhaps, the fear of Burnside on the left and Porter in front, held the enemy in check. For two or three hours there was a lull even in the cannonade on the right which hitherto had been incessant. McClellan had been over on the field after Sumner's repulse, but had speedily returned to his headquarters. Sumner again sent word that he was able to hold his position, but could not advance with his own corps.

Meantime where was Burnside, and what was he doing? On the right where I had spent the day until two o'clock, little was known of the general fortunes of the field. We had heard Porter's guns in the center, but nothing from Burnside on the left. The distance was too great to distinguish the sound of his artillery from Porter's left. There was no immediate prospect of more fighting on the right, and I left the field which all day long had seen the most obstinate contest of the war, and rode over to McClellan's headquarters. The different battle-fields were shut out from each other's view, but all partially visible from the central hill which General McClellan had occupied during the day. But I was more than ever impressed on returning with the completely deceitful appearance of the ground the Rebels had chosen when viewed from the front.

Hooker's and Sumner's struggle had been carried on over an uneven and wooded surface, their own line of battle extending in a semi-circle not less than a mile and a half. Perhaps a better notion of their position can be got by considering their right, center and left as forming three sides of a square. So long therefore as either wing was driven back, the center became exposed to a very dangerous enfilading fire, and the further the center was advanced the worse off it was, unless the lines on its side and rear were firmly held. This formation resulted originally from the efforts of the enemy to turn both flanks. Hooker, at the very outset, threw his column so far into the center of the Rebel lines that they were compelled to threaten him on the flank to secure their own center.

Nothing of all this was perceptible from the hills in front. Some directions of the Rebel lines had been disclosed by the smoke of their guns, but the whole interior formation of the country beyond the hills was completely concealed. When McClellan arranged his order of battle, it must have been upon information, or have been left to his corps and division commander to discover for themselves.

Up to 3 o'clock Burnside had made little progress. His attack on the bridge had been successful, but the delay had been so great that to the observer it appeared as if McClellan's plans must have been seriously disarranged. It is impossible not to suppose that the attacks on right and left were meant in a measure to correspond, for otherwise the enemy had only to repel Hooker on the one hand, then transfer his troops, and hurl them against Burnside.

Here was the difference between Smith and Burnside. The former did his work at once, and lost all his men at once—that is, all whom he lost at all; Burnside seems to have attacked cautiously in order to save his men, and sending successively insufficient forces against a position of strength, distributed his loss over a greater period of time, but yet lost none the less in the end.

Finally, at 4 o'clock, McClellan sent simultaneous orders to Burnside and Franklin; to the former to advance and carry the batteries in his front at all hazards and any cost; to the latter to carry the woods next in front of him to the right, which the Rebels still held. The order to Franklin, however, was practically countermanded, in consequence of a message from Gen. Sumner that if Franklin went on and was repulsed, his own corps was not yet sufficiently reorganized to be depended on as a reserve.

Franklin, thereupon, was directed to run no risk of losing his present position, and, instead of sending his infantry into the woods, contented himself with advancing his batteries over the breadth of the fields in front, supporting them with heavy columns of infantry, and attacking with energy the Rebel batteries immediately opposed to him. His movement was a success, so far as it went, the batteries maintaining their new ground, and sensibly affecting the steadiness of the Rebel fire. That being once accomplished, and all hazard of the right being again forced back having been dispelled, the movement of Burnside became at once the turning-point of success, and the fate of the day depended on him.

How extraordinary the situation was may be judged from a moment's consideration of the facts. It is understood that from the outset Burnside's attack was expected to be decisive, as it certainly must have been if things went well elsewhere, and if he succeeded in establishing himself on the Sharpsburg road in the Rebel rear.

Yet Hooker, and Sumner, and Franklin, and Mansfield were all sent to the right three miles away, while Porter seems to have done double duty with his single corps in front, both supporting the batteries and holding himself in reserve. With all this immense force on the right, but 16,000 men were given to Burnside for the decisive movement of the day.

Still more unfortunate in its results was the total failure of these separate attacks on the right and left to sustain, or in any manner co-operate with each other. Burnside hesitated for hours in front of the bridge which should have been carried at once by a *coup de main*. Meantime Hooker had been fighting for four hours with various fortune, but final success. Sumner had come up too late to join in the decisive attack which his earlier arrival would probably have converted into a complete success; and Franklin reached the scene only when Sumner had been repulsed. Probably before his arrival the Rebels had transferred a considerable number of troops to their right to meet the attack of Burnside, the direction of which was then suspected or developed.

Attacking first with one regiment, then with two, and delaying both for artillery, Burnside was not over the bridge before 2 o'clock—perhaps not till 3. He advanced slowly up the slopes in his front, his batteries in rear covering, to some extent, the movements of the infantry. A desperate fight was going on in a deep ravine on his right, the Rebel batteries were in full play and, apparently, very annoying and destructive, while heavy columns of Rebel troops were plainly visible, advancing as if careless of concealment, along the road and over the hills in the direction of Burnside's forces. It was at this point of time that McClellan sent him the order above given.

Burnside obeyed it most gallantly. Getting his troops well in hand, and sending a portion of his artillery to the front, he advanced them with rapidity and the most determined vigor, straight up the hill in front, on top of which the Rebels had maintained their most dangerous battery. The movement was in plain view of McClellan's position, and as Franklin, on the other side sent his batteries into the field about the same time, the battle seemed to open in all directions with greater activity than ever.

The fight in the ravine was in full progress, the batteries which Porter supported were firing with new vigor, Franklin was blazing away on the right, and every hill-top, ridge and woods along the whole line was crested and veiled with white clouds of smoke. All day had been clear and bright since the early cloudy morning, and now this whole magnificent, unequaled scene shone with the splendor of an afternoon September sun. Four miles of battle, its glory all visible, its horrors all veiled, the fate of the Republic hanging on the hour—could any one be insensible of its grandeur.

There are two hills on the left of the road, the furthest the lowest. The Rebels have batteries on both. Burnside is ordered to carry the nearest to him, which is the furthest from the road. His guns opening first from this new position in front, soon entirely controlled and silenced the enemy's artillery. The infantry came on at once, moving rapidly and steadily up long dark lines, and broad, dark masses, being plainly visible without a glass as they moved over the green hill-side.

The next moment the road in which the Rebel battery was planted was canopied with clouds of dust swiftly descending into the valley. Underneath was a tumult of wagons, guns, horses, and men flying at speed down the road. Blue flashes of smoke burst now and then among them, a horse or a man or half dozen went down, and then the whirlwind swept on.

The hill was carried, but could it be held? The Rebel columns, before seen moving to the left, increased their pace. The guns, on the hill above, sent an angry tempest of shell down among Burnside's guns and men. He had formed his columns apparently in the near angles of two fields bordering the road—high ground about them everywhere except in rear.

In another moment a Rebel battle-line appears on the brow of the ridge above them, moves swiftly down in the most perfect order, and though met by incessant discharges of musketry, of which we plainly see the flashes, does not fire a gun. White spaces show where men are falling, but they close up instantly, and still the line advances. The brigades of Burnside are in heavy column; they will not give way before a bayonet charge in line. The Rebels think twice before they dash into these hostile masses.

There is a halt, the Rebel left gives way and scatters over the field, the rest stand fast and fire. More infantry comes up, Burnside is outnumbered; flanked, compelled to yield the hill he took so bravely. His position is no longer one of attack; he defends himself with unfaltering firmness, but he sends to McClellan for help. McClellan's glass for the last half hour has seldom been turned away from the left.

He sees clearly enough that Burnside is pressed—needs no messenger to tell him that. His face grows darker with anxious thought. Looking down into the valley where 15,000 troops are lying, he turns a half-questioning look on Fitz John Porter, who stands by his side, gravely scanning the field. They are Porter's troops below, are fresh and only impatient to share in this fight. But Porter slowly shakes his head, and one may believe that the same thought is passing through the minds of both generals: "They are the only reserves of the army; they cannot be spared."

McClellan remounts his horse, and with Porter and a dozen officers of his staff rides away to the left in Burnside's direction. Sykes meets them on the road—a good soldier, whose opinion is worth taking. The three Generals talk briefly together. It is easy to see that the moment has come when everything may turn on one order given or withheld, when the history of the battle is only to be written in thoughts and purposes and words of the General.

Burnside's messenger rides up. His message is, "I want troops and guns. If you do not send them I cannot hold my position for half an hour." McClellan's only answer for the moment is a glance at the western sky. Then he turns and speaks very slowly: "Tell Gen. Burnside that this is the battle of the war. He must hold his ground till dark at any cost. "I will send him Miller's battery. I can do nothing more. I have no infantry." Then as the messenger was riding away he called him back. "Tell him if he *cannot* hold his ground, then the bridge, to the last man!—always the bridge!—If the bridge is lost, all is lost."

The sun is already down; not half-an-hour of daylight is left. Till Burnside's message came it had seemed plain to every one that the battle could not be finished to-day. None suspected how near was the peril of defeat, of sudden attack on exhausted forces—how vital to the safety of the army and the nation were those fifteen thousand waiting troops of Fitz John Porter in the hollow. But the Rebels halted instead of pushing on, their vindictive cannonade died away as the light faded. Before it was quite dark the battle was over. Only a solitary gun of Burnside's thundered against the enemy, and presently this also ceased, and the field was still.

The peril came very near, but it has passed, and in spite of the peril, at the close the day was partly a success—not a victory, but an advantage had been gained. Hooker, Sumner, and Franklin held all the ground they had gained, and Burnside still held the bridge and his position beyond. Everything was favorable for a renewal of the fight in the morning. If the plan of the battle is sound, there is every reason why McClellan should win it. He may choose to postpone the battle to await his re-enforcements.

The Rebels may choose to retire while it is possible. Fatigue on both sides might delay the deciding battle, yet if the enemy means to fight at all, he cannot afford to delay. His re-enforcements may be coming, his losses are enormous. His troops have been massed in woods and hollows, where artillery has had its most terrific effect. Ours have been deployed and scattered. From infantry fire there is less difference.

It is hard to estimate losses on a field of such extent, but I think ours cannot be less than six thousand killed and wounded—it may be much greater. Prisoners have been taken from the enemy—I hear of a regiment captured entire, but I doubt it. All the prisoners whom I saw agree in saying that their whole army is there.

Concert of Mr. Theodore Thomas.

Irving Hall has been for more than two month under the hands of Italian fresco painters, receiving an entirely new and brilliant painting. Allegorical ladies and gentlemen, and medallions, in all the necessary chromatics figure in elegant profusion throughout its interior. The rear wall has been deprived of its angles, and two proscenium boxes adorn it. The wall itself is scenically illustrated with architectural paintings, which give the effect of greater depth to the room. Altogether the decorations are most successfully made, and add to the attractions of the hall.

Mr. Theodore Thomas is very ardent and liberal in giving good concerts. Not only has he a capital orchestra of 60 performers, but a harpist, pianist, and vocalist, for his fifty cent entertainment. The symphony performed of C. P. Emanuel Bach, of the most gifted whole family of musicians who ever lived, and son of the great Sebastian Bach, was composed in the blessed A. D year 1776. A venerable old composition of an *Allegro*, *Largo*, and *Presto*—and the model Haydn loved, and which has come down to this day only somewhat extended by other composers. Those amateurs who would know how really fresh the ideas of this composer are, notwithstanding their age, have only to consult the *Fétis* edition of his piano works; and they will acknowledge that strong, brave men lived before Agamemnon.

The next orchestral piece was one of the incomparable overtures of Von Weber, the beautiful, noble, fiery *Oberon*. The music of Meyerbeer's *Struensee* was presented, orchestral and vocal. Parts of it are rather heavy, but others inspiriting and grand and worthy of the composer. The new composition of Auber, the London Crystal Palace "Inauguration March in the form of an overture" is a dashing composition for a man of nearly eighty; for so venerable is the composer of the immortal *Masaniello*. It contains a slow movement, chiefly for brass instruments; then a regular allegro with first and second themes; and a thundering finale.

Madame D'Angri sang "*Ah mon fils*" from the *Prophet* of Meyerbeer, and the *Elena Waltz*, with tempestuous applause, and received full encores in both.

Mr. William Mason played in a masterly manner, a piano "transcription" of Meyerbeer's Schiller March—a massive and effective work; also, a new and brilliant Concert Gallop of his own.

The concert gave great satisfaction, and is most creditable to the enterprise of the leader of the orchestra, Mr. Thomas.

CITY ITEMS.

The Academy of Music, with Miss Charlotte Patti as prima donna, will open on Monday evening.

CREMORNE GARDEN.—The performance this evening at Nixon's Cremorne Garden will be for the benefit of the employees of the establishment. "The French Spy" will be repeated, with the Chinese pantomime of "Kim-Ka."

NEW-YORK HARMONIC SOCIETY.—It is announced that the regular rehearsals of this Society will be resumed next Monday evening, at No. 288 Fourth avenue. Handel's "Messiah" will be first taken up.

WINTER GARDEN.—"Macbeth" will be repeated this evening for the last time during Miss Bateman's engagement.

CENTRAL PARK CONCERT.—The Commissioners announce that there will be music at the Central Park this afternoon, as usual.

B. F. Wolcidon of New Hampshire, United States Commissioner and Consul-General to Hayti, will sail in the steamer Talisman from this city for Port au Prince to-day.

L. Stimson, stationer, publishes on our sixth page to-day a curious advertisement, which can be cut out for preservation and use in the family circle and camp, as it forms a perfect checker-board.

MAILS FOR EUROPE.—The mails close this morning at 10½ o'clock.

ARTIFICIAL LIMBS.—Dr. E. D. Hudson, formerly of the firm of Palmer & Co., is now engaged on his own account in the manufacture of artificial limbs, and has established an office and manufactory in Clinton Hall, Astor Place. Dr. H. has made great improvements in artificial legs and arms, as numerous letters and certificates from his patients attest. One of his patients, who had the misfortune to lose both legs by accident, has had them replaced by artificial ones, upon which he travels daily without inconvenience 14 miles, going to and returning from his work.

AN APPEAL.—The Hospital Committee of the Young Men's Christian Association renew their appeal for volunteer night watchers for the soldiers hospitals in this city. The field of operations having become greatly extended by the large accessions of sick and wounded soldiers, many more watchers are needed, and all who can are invited to unite in the good work. James S. Stearns, No 106 Broadway, Chairman of the Committee, will receive names, &c.

[Advertisement.]

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[Advertisement.]

GRAND GALA DAY at BARNUM'S MUSEUM for Ladies and Children.—Thousands of them will witness the performance of the new drama, "Claude Marcel, or the Idiot of Tartes," this afternoon and evening, and see those exquisitely beautiful fish, the like of which have never before been seen in the world.

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